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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KYIV 000814

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/13/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [UP](#)

SUBJECT: INTERIOR MINISTER TENDERS RESIGNATION OVER AIRPORT  
SCUFFLE

Classified By: Acting DCM Colin Cleary for reasons 1.4(b,d)

SUMMARY

1. (C) Minister of Interior Yuriy Lutsenko submitted his resignation to the Rada on May 12 in response to German and Ukrainian media reports that he was detained by airport police in Frankfurt on May 4. According to the reports Lutsenko was intoxicated and assaulted four German police officers while transiting Frankfurt airport with a Ministry of Interior delegation headed to South Korea. Lutsenko submitted his resignation upon his return from Seoul. Contacts say there is little support in the Rada, apart from the opposition Party of Regions, for removing Lutsenko. German Embassy contacts are concerned that Lutsenko has begun to spin the story, claiming that the German police overreacted and were abusive towards his 19-year old son, who was a member of the delegation. End Summary

LUTSENKO'S FRANKFURT FRACAS

2. (SBU) In a May 6 article, later carried in most Ukrainian press, German newspaper Bild reported that Ukrainian Minister of Interior Yuriy Lutsenko and his son were prevented from boarding a flight at Frankfurt airport to South Korea on May 4 because of severe intoxication. Lutsenko was leading a Ministry of Interior (MOI) delegation to meetings in Seoul. In the confrontation with airport staff and police that ensued, Bild claimed that Lutsenko injured four policemen and repeatedly called the German officers "Nazi swine." Lutsenko and his son were handcuffed and taken into police custody. After verifying Lutsenko's identity the police released him and his son and allowed the delegation to board a later flight to Seoul.

RESIGNATION LETTER SUBMITTED TO RADA

3. (SBU) Lutsenko submitted his letter of resignation to the Rada on May 12 after his return from South Korea. A absolute majority of MPs (226) will need to vote to accept Lutsenko's resignation for it to take effect. In his resignation Lutsenko corroborates some of the facts of the Bild article, but disputes the claim that he was intoxicated or that there was a physical altercation. He said that the delegation was denied boarding because they arrived at the plane after the last boarding call and that airport police overreacted to a verbal confrontation with Lufthansa staff. Lutsenko said he submitted his resignation in order to protect the MOI from domestic political machinations and that he will sue Bild for defamation over its accusations that he was intoxicated.

COALITION SUPPORTING LUTSENKO

4. (C) Prime Minister Tymoshenko's bloc (BYuT) will not vote to accept Lutsenko's resignation, according to BYuT MP

Valeriy Pysarenko. He told us that party leadership confiscated BYuT MPs' voting cards on the morning of May 12, to ensure that if a vote took place no BYuT MPs could break ranks and support Lutsenko's resignation. Rada speaker Volodymyr Lytvyn told the Ambassador on May 12 that his party had not yet decided how to vote, but that the Communist party had been "influenced" to side with BYuT. Pro-government MP Kirilo Kulikov, a member of Lutsenko's People's Self Defense party within pro-government OU-PSD, told us that while he personally believes that Lutsenko should be removed, the faction will not vote to accept his resignation.

#### OPPOSITION BLOCKS THE RADA, DEMANDS LUTSENKO'S OUSTER

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15. (C) Opposition Party of Regions began blocking the Rada rostrum on May 12, preventing parliament from convening and demanding Lutsenko be removed. Regions MP Hanna Herman said that Regions would continue to block the Rada's work until the governing coalition agrees to accept Lutsenko's resignation. The effort within Regions to remove Lutsenko, according to Regions deputy faction leader Volodymyr Makeyenko, is being spearheaded by MP and businessman Borys Kolesnykov. He wants revenge for his four month detention in 2005 when Lutsenko targeted him as part of an anti-corruption campaign. Makeyenko said that the posters hung by Regions MPs in the Rada chamber on May 12 accusing Lutsenko of drunkenness and the empty vodka bottles accompanied by MOI badges placed on the rostrum were part of Kolesnykov's effort to shame Lutsenko.

#### GERMAN EMBASSY DECLINES COMMENT

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16. (C) German Embassy Political Counselor Manuel Mueller told us that media interest in the story has been extremely high. The Germans had decided to confirm Lutsenko's transit through Frankfurt, but to offer no comment or further information regarding the reported altercation. Mueller noted that his Embassy was concerned that Lutsenko had begun to spin the story, claiming that German police had overreacted and assaulted his 19-year old son, who was a member of the delegation. According to Mueller his government was also prepared for additional media stories castigating Germany for what many Ukrainians feel is a too rigid visa regime and dismissive or hostile treatment for Ukrainian visitors by German authorities.

#### COMMENT

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17. (C) The coalition seems inclined to back Lutsenko's continuation as Minister of Interior. Lutsenko's ouster could expose divisions within the coalition over the choice of his replacement as MOI chief, and jeopardize the continued support of Lutsenko's party (17 MPs) within the pro-coalition part of the OU-PSD faction.

TAYLOR